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**EXPERIENCING NATURE- BASED TOURISM THROUGH THE HUMAN
SENSES**

A Phenomenological Approach

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Summary:

Nature-based tourism has become one of the fastest growing sectors within the tourism industry, due to an increased demand for better recreation and relaxation means in nature at the turn of the 21st century. While nature-based tourism has received much of academic and general attention, the same cannot be said about the influence of the *human senses* on nature-based tourism experience. In fact, it was only until very recently that the academic community started paying attention to the importance of the senses and attempted to discover a more holistic way to approach the sensescape.

The purpose of this master's thesis is to discover the influence of the senses on nature-based tourism experience. Given that the study in question is phenomenological, a qualitative approach was adopted to best understand the research subject. A number of semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain an insight of how each individual perceive the influences that the senses have on their overall experience in nature.

The results showed that while the senses have actual influences on one's experience in nature, not all the senses have such impact equally. Sight appeared to be the dominant sense, followed by hearing, with the remaining senses being secondary in importance. Furthermore, the interview sessions also revealed an appreciation for nature and nature-based tourism, which is a common sentiment among the participants. Further research should pay attention to the interactions between the senses, as well as the utilization of experiential point during the experience design phase.

Keywords: Nature-based tourism, human senses, qualitative research, phenomenology, tourism experience

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of study

It was a hot, sunny summer day when I arrived at Vantaa airport in Helsinki. As if a usual routine, the airport was filled with people, most of whom are travelers, either hurrying to embark on their next journey or just patiently waiting at a cozy spot they managed to occupy. With my big red backpack fitting snugly on my back, I wandered around until I found a seat near my designated gate and proceeded to sit down. Seeing that there was not anyone around yet, I left my bag on the next seat and started browsing on my phone. It did not occur to me that a family of three was approaching. At first, I only noticed, out of a corner of my eyes, that they were oddly silent. I took my bag off and placed it on the ground to make space for them, and I only realized later that they were deaf and mute. Perhaps it was my curiosity, or the eagerness to communicate with them somehow, I decided to “talk” to them via small pieces of paper that I could find. With hurriedly scribbled sentences on pieces of paper, I came to know their purpose of travel. This family of three set out on a long journey to meet Santa Claus, and to experience the pristine nature of Finland in the summer time.

We continued to “communicate” for a while, and I discovered that we shared a common destination, namely Rovaniemi. After one hour of sitting idly on the plane, I arrived in Rovaniemi and helped said family with booking a taxi to their accommodation. Standing alone in front of the automated doors of the airport after they had left, I started wondering if the way said travelers experience nature is different from mine. I continued to think about such matters for a while, about whether our senses have an impact on our experiences that we often tend to overlook. Gradually, my curiosity became an interest, and I chose to research about the influence of the senses on how we experience nature for my master’s thesis.

Researches show that ever since the turn of the millennium, there has been an increase in demands for better means of recreation, relaxation, as well as entertainment associated with nature. As a result, nature-based tourism quickly became one of the rapidly growing sectors

within the tourism industry. (Fredman and Tyrväinen, 2010; Samgönguráðuneytið, 2004.) More and more, nature-based tourism, as well as the experience that it provides, have continuously been given the spotlight by both the media and the general public (Vespestad & Lindberg, 2011, p. 563).

Studies suggest that the increased demands for nature-based tourism could stem from the fact that urbanization and globalization have altogether changed our lives. We lead a convenient life, and in the process, we have been almost completely disconnected from nature. We are surrounded by amenities and conveniences, to the point it might be hard to picture the animals behind the food we consume and the clothes that give us warmth, and the trees that gave us the furniture we have in our home. We become busy with our urban life, as we chase after happiness and life via obtaining material possessions and social status. Thus, we become exhausted from the psychological damage inflicted upon us by the everyday urban life that we lead (Kuenzi & McNeely, 2008; Thoreau, 2017[1854]).

Yet, at the same time, we gain a more profound insight of how incredible and beautiful nature can be, via numerous pictures, videos and documentaries brought to us by the media channels catering our needs for information. This could be the reason why so many perceive nature-based tourism experience to be unique, as reconnecting with nature offers a different form of holiday experience, a break from our everyday life. It could be said that being in nature helps us recover from the psychological damage from our everyday urban life and realize the important matters in life (De Botton, 2002; Rousseau, 2004; Thoreau, 2017[1854].) Perhaps the regenerating effect is what makes nature-based experience so appealing for many.

While nature-based tourism and its experience continue to pique interest, there is few studies about how the human's senses can influence the experience spent in nature. Our senses are the body's means of gathering and using information as the foundation for understanding and developing meanings. According to Csordas (1994), "people explore a place, they see, hear, smell, touch and taste in combination with their own thought and prior experiences simultaneously insides and as their bodies." Several authors suggested that by sensing, our

body establishes and evaluates the relationship between the place and its meaning (Csordas, 1994; Krishna, 2012, p. 344; Tuan, 1977.) As our emotional and cognitive responses of places can be understood through embodied experiences, knowing about this process offers key advantage in understanding the consumer's cognitive processes (Gibson, 1966; Kim & Fesenmaier, 2015) However, it is difficult for both those who participate in tourism and researchers to articulate and capture the nature-based experience, which accounts for the lack of studies concerning said topic (Curtin 2009, p. 458).

1.2 Previous studies

There are numerous expressions concerning nature-based tourism (NBT), and yet there is no universally nor scientifically agreed definition for this phenomenon (Silvennoinen & Tyrväinen, 2001). Nevertheless, the theoretical discussion about nature-based tourism can be traced back to 1980s. During this time, nature-based tourism was defined as a form of tourism focuses on “the enjoyment of natural areas and the observation of nature”. This type of tourism was also believed to not have too severe environmental impacts while being able to contribute to the nation socially and economically (Lucas, 1984, as cited in Valentine, 1992). On the other hand, NBT at the same time was defined as a style of tourism that merges factors such as education, recreation and even adventure (Laarman & Durst, 1987, as cited in Valentine, 1992).

Fast forward to the early period of the 1990s, the theoretical discussion for nature-based tourism implied that eco-tourism and nature-based tourism can be used interchangeably as terms. For instance, Boo (1990) used eco-tourism and nature-based tourism synonymously and defined the term to discuss about travels to areas that are relatively undisturbed to study and enjoy the natural scenery while simultaneously learn about cultural manifestations. According to Valentine (1992), other authors saw nature-based tourism as a subset of larger class of tourism styles or development, leading to other terms being applied to ecotourism and NBT itself, such as ‘green tourism’ and ‘sustainable tourism’ (Lane, 1990, as cited in Valentine, 1992; Valentine, 1992). In a way, these alternative terms showed a critical concern

about mass tourism and the consequences it had on people and places, which still holds true until today (Valentine, 1992).

Fast forward until the 21st century, the theoretical discussion about nature-based tourism persists, with a few additional changes. Fredman and Tyrväinen (2010) suggested that majority of the scholars now tend to connect the term with leisure activities that occur in natural areas, with the key elements being the visitor being away from home and the experiences related to nature. This also shows an emergence of a definitional consensus in literature (Fredman & Tyrväinen, 2010, p. 180.) Moreover, several themes have been recognized and associated with nature-based tourism. Among these themes, there are four themes that have been identified as being recurrent, which are “(i) visitors to a nature area, (ii) experiences of a natural environment, (iii) participation in an activity, (iv) normative components related to sustainable development and local impacts” (Fredman et al., 2009, as cited in Fredman & Tyrväinen, 2010).

On the other hand, the theoretical discussion of the roles that the senses have in our life, experience and knowledge can be traced back to the early days of philosophy (Aristotle, 2001; Plato, 2003). According to Meacci and Liberatore (2015), Aristotle claimed that through the apprehension of the external world, sense perception becomes the origins of knowledge. This is followed by the process of abstraction that allows us to capture the essence of objects. Aristotle also made a division and hierarchy of the senses, with sight being the dominating sense (Meacci & Liberatore, 2015, p. 2.) Aristotle’s claims were defended and further developed by Kant in the 18th century, who stated that our knowledge began with the senses, and evolved with understanding and reasoning (Deleuze, 1994). In his work named “Phenomenology of Perception”, Merleau-Ponty (2002) emphasized the importance of the body perception, claiming that the body is a form of consciousness. The body’s interactions with the world, from Merleau-Ponty’s point of view, constitute the mental states and their activities. With such statement, the dualism of body and mind was thus rejected (Merleau-Ponty, 2002).

The development of new sciences in the 20th century advanced the study of the importance of the senses in experience and understanding of the world, attracting interests of various disciplines and academic fields (Meacci & Liberatore, 2015, p. 2). Social-anthropological studies believe senses to be a product of place and time, given how people's perception and understanding of smell, sound, taste and sight alters with the flow of history (Smith, 2007). Marketing management sees senses as a means to increase the appeal of products and services and calls for a focus on existing sensations and the creation of sensations (Malefyt, 2015). Finally, in the field of experiential tourism, there has always been a systematic focus on the visual component, disregarding the other senses completely or partially in the process (Pan & Ryan, 2009). The problematic focus on sight is a result of the success of Urry's (1990) concept of the tourist gaze. His approach, while being used in various works, has also prevented itself from becoming the foundation of a general paradigm for the sociological study of tourism (Dann & Nordstrand, 2009; Everett, 2009; Lagerkvist, 2007).

There exists the paradigm of embodiment that emphasizes on the embodied experiences in the realm of tourism, which offers a better understanding of the roles of different senses. It should also be noted that studies about the roles of the senses in the tourist experience are still scarce (Meacci & Liberatore, 2015, p. 2). Nevertheless, the current literature is moving away from prioritizing the visual component to focus more on all the bodily senses. Different scholars and researchers are hoping to achieve a more well-rounded approach to sensescape and to shed some light on the sensory dimension in the tourist experience (Agapito, Valle, & Mendes, 2012, 2013; Ellis & Rossman, 2008; Govers et al., 2007; Gretzel & Fesenmaier, 2003; Kastenholz et al., 2012; Urry, 2002).

1.3 Purpose of study

The study is an attempt to gain an insight on the roles that the human senses have on the tourist's experience in nature. The aim of the study is to examine how different senses perform during the time that the traveler spends in a natural setting, as well as the common census towards nature-based tourism. By knowing how each sense performs and the

influence they have on the tourist's experience, it is then possible to determine the roles they have on shaping the experience on has in nature. In order to carry out the research, the author chose to apply qualitative methodology. Necessary data and information were collected through interviews that were arranged together with one of the local tourism companies of Rovaniemi, which were later analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis methods and disciplines. In the process, the research also seeks the answers to a number of research questions that were established in advance:

RQ 1: "How do tourists visiting Rovaniemi perceive nature-based tourism?"

RQ 1: "What is the role of the human senses in the creation of tourism experience?"

RQ 2: "Which of the human senses seems to be the most relevant for the creation of a tourism experience?"

The steady increase in popularity of nature-based tourism within the tourism section as well as the interests in roles the human senses have on the tourist experience offer a justification for this research. The research also gives focus to other senses to avoid the systematic focus on the visual component, which has been done quite often in previous studies after the success of the tourist's gaze (Pan & Ryan, 2009). Furthermore, it is crucial to understand how the senses perform, as the way the tourists experience different places have a strong link with the human senses (Markwell, 2001). The information that came as a result of this research will be useful for the tourism industry at destinations where nature-based tourism is an essential element.

1.4 Methodology

As my research delves into the realm of individuals' experiences, I decided to apply a phenomenological approach, which is suitable for creating conditions to examine subjects that are otherwise subjective (Sangeetha et al., 2014). The first step of gathering data was to conduct semi-structured interviews, which will allow the interviewees more flexibility to decide how they can respond (Edwards & Holland, 2013, p. 29). The data for my research is

the records of the interview sessions, which were then transcribed and analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis.

The empirical material of the study consists of interviews that I conducted with tourists representing different nationalities. The interview sessions occurred only in Rovaniemi, and at a chosen coffee shop for convenience for both my convenience and the interviewees'. The interviewees were chosen based on the suggestion of Beyond Arctic, the company that I was working with via the suggestion of my supervisor. As a result, I did not know about the interviewees in advance, as I only got to meet them after they have come back from their trip. Since the tourists were suggested for me before hand, the only criteria that I had in my mind were that they are here in Rovaniemi for travelling purposes, and that their English was good enough for a short interview session.

I completed the interviews during the period of March-April 2018. In total, I successfully conducted four different interview sessions, with one session having only one participant. As such, I was able to interview a total of ten interviewees, most of whom were quite active and keen travelers. All of the interviewees came to Lapland to enjoy their holiday, and out of ten interviewees, four of them are in their twenties. Other interviewees were in their early thirties to mid-forties, and all of them are from rather hectic, bustling cities such as Munich and Barcelona. Fortunately, all of the participants were keen and willing to talk openly about the experience they had in the nature of Lapland.

1.5 Structure of the study

The thesis has five main chapters, with theoretical framework starting from chapter two. In the second chapter of the thesis, I will explain about nature-based tourism, starting with the emergence of the term "Nature-based tourism". Afterwards, the thesis will continue with an explanation of the relationship between nature and tourism, or in other words, the tourism-nature interface. To conclude chapter two, I will introduce the current discourse and its different possible topics regarding the nature-tourism relationship. For chapter three, I will

offer a discussion about the senses. The first subchapter in this section will be about the senses in general, followed by another subchapter about how social sciences perceive the senses. This chapter will end with a subchapter about how the senses are regarded in the field of tourism. Next, I will dedicate chapter four to explaining the process of data collecting and analyzing. I will start chapter four with an explanation of how I constructed and completed my interview sessions, followed by showing how the analysis process was completed. The fifth main chapter of the thesis will then present the findings I have obtained from the study. Lastly, chapter six will be my conclusion regarding what I have discovered.

2. NATURE-BASED TOURISM

2.1 The emergence of nature-based tourism

I will start this chapter with the investigation of how nature-based tourism became such a global tourism trend as it is nowadays. In other words, I will seek to answer how and when did nature-base tourism emerge and develop to reach the rapidly developing phase that it is experiencing currently. Evidences concerning the emergence of nature-based tourism can be found in Jafari's framework of tourism development, which were outlined by Weaver (2001). According to Weaver (2001), tourism has undergone four different platforms of development ever since the thrive of modern mass tourism. The first platform was known as the 'advocacy platform', which occurred between the 1950s and 1960s. During this stage, tourism was not as thriving as it is today, and was seen as only a beneficial economic activity that was recommended for particularly developing countries.

Nevertheless, tourism began to boast its economic prowess and embarked on a path to become one of the largest industries in the world in the 1970s. At the same time, the industry's unceasing development raises concern, as tourism's negative impacts became increasingly explicit. Thus, tourism then entered the 'cautionary platform', where regulations were implemented to oversee the industry's development. Tourism then entered the third platform, known as the 'adaptancy platform', in 1980s when people started to focus on the negative economic, social and cultural impacts of tourism. During this time, great efforts were made to discover an alternative tourism that is more host-friendly, compared to mass tourism (Weaver, 2001.) The fourth platform, which occurred at the end of 1980s and early 1990s, led to an increase in environmentalism (Holden, 2003; Weaver, 2001).

Apart from the previously mentioned four platforms, a fifth one was suggested by MacBeth (2005), in which the paradigm of sustainability was an essential element. Under the name of 'alternative tourism', various forms of tourism activities were developed, which were far more compatible with the environment than mass tourism (Holden, 2003). Nature-based

tourism was part of the alternative-tourism scheme. This form of tourism activity has in fact occurred ever since the adaptancy platform of Jafari, which was during the 1980s (Diamantis, 1999; Rinne & Saastamoinen, 2005). Nature-based tourism can be seen as a broad category that includes some other forms of tourism, such as ecotourism, adventure tourism, sustainable tourism as well as cultural tourism (Weaver, 2001). Valentine (1992) shared similar thoughts in his definition of nature-based tourism and stated that nature-based tourism includes “the direct enjoyment of some relatively undisturbed phenomenon of nature”. Nevertheless, up until now, the scholarly world experienced difficulty in coining a concrete definition for nature-based tourism. I will attempt to delve deeper into this matter later in this chapter.

Gradually, nature-based tourism has become a tourism activity that offers significant economic benefits, and as an economic activity, it has grown rapidly and surpassed tourism as a whole (Nyaupane et al., 2004; Wight, 1996). Moreover, several commentators have also suggested that being an economic activity, nature-based tourism can also provide great benefits to the host economies (e.g Silverberg et al., 1996). With such significant economic meanings, nature-based tourism has also become one of the most important topic of tourism studies (Hall & Boyd, 2005). As a result, there is a wide range of literature that proposes explanations behind the growth of nature-based tourism. On a macro level, one of the main reasons that account for the increase in demands for this form of tourism is the environmental movement that has continued for decades, as suggested by Lee (1997).

As suggested by Weaver (2001), there are several factors that accounted for the advancement of such an important movement, with the first being the increased environmental awareness of the public. Furthermore, the media has eagerly covered environmental issues through their broadcasts and a wide range of publications. Additionally, the easy access to information combined with the advance of information technology are also the reasons of how many came to know about the damages inflicted on the environment, as an aftermath of growing population over time. The third factor that influenced the environmental movement, is a chain of environmental disasters that have shaken the world. The fourth and final factor, based on

the previously mentioned factors, concerns the international agenda that emphasizes the well-being of the environment set forth by the governments (Weaver, 2001).

To some extent, nature-based tourism, with its high level of individuality, activity and flexibility, is seen as an alternative form of tourism. It is also worth mentioning that the younger generations are now focusing on post-materialistic values. As a result, they seek to connect with nature, which could also explain the increase in interests regarding nature-based tourism (Teigland, 2000). Finally, nature-based tourism appeals to many through offering them the opportunity to experience a contrast to everyday life. It can be understood that tourists travel to natural areas in search of a break from their monotonous and mundane everyday life (Mehmetoglu, 2008, p. 113).

To elaborate further, I will repeat what was mentioned by Kuenzi and McNeely (2008) and Thoreau (2017) in the introduction chapter about urbanization and globalization. Our lives have changed significantly in the times of globalization and urbanization. We pursue material possessions as a means to achieve happiness, or at least the happiness that our urban life would allow us. Eventually, at one point, we become tired, worn out, exhausted from the chase, and from the psychological damages that our everyday urban life inflicts upon us (Kuenzi & McNeely, 2008; Thoreau, 2017[1854].) At the same time, in accordance with De Botton (2002) and Rousseau (2004), we are also brought closer to nature through the pictures and videos that capture and exhibit its beauty. Thus, tourists are attracted to nature-based tourism experience, as through reconnecting with nature, they get to live a different form of holiday experience while simultaneously having a temporary disconnection from their daily life (De Botton, 2002; Rousseau, 2004).

According to Brymer et al. (2012), natural environment also offers various benefits, especially ones that are associated with health and the well-being of people. At a glance, nature is a source of life for us, offering air to keep the flow of our breath and nurture us with water. However, research has shown that contact with the natural world can deeply and positively change the state of our mental and physical well-being. Engaging oneself with the

natural world can enhance one's perceptions on many levels, from physiological to even spiritual, that no other methods can compare. Nature helps us to recover from mental fatigue, gives us time and an opportunity to deeply reflect on our life, to foster and rekindle essential connections that we have (Brymer et al., 2012).

While the academic world has begun to recognize the economic meaning of nature-based tourism, most empirical works were done on a micro level, with an emphasis on sociodemographic and psychographic aspects of nature-based tourists in varying context. There is a lack of studies regarding nature-based tourism on a macro level, which could potentially provide an understanding for the emergence and evolution of this tourism activity (Mehmetoglu, 2008, p. 112.) Weaver (2001) has suggested that managers and marketers, regardless of their business activity, should be able to know whether on-going trends are the result of internal or macro external factors.

By knowing if a trend would evolve into permanent developments, managers and marketers would then be able to place development priority on enhancing nature-base tourism for their destination or not, and how can such task be done (Weaver, 2001). Also, it is worth considering that for some tourists, environmentalism is not among the top of their concerns, and they are purely travelling to take a break from their ordinary everyday life (Fairweather et al., 2005). Since so many tourists are embarking on a journey to natural areas, and share their experience on online travel platforms, this also encourages people to experience such form of tourism out of curiosity.

To summarize, the emergence of nature-based tourism is prompted by social and demographic drivers and trends, as well as drivers and trends related to the environment itself. In countries, especially developed nations, the affluent society sees a rise in average incomes, allowing people to indulge in leisure and recreation activities. On top of that, consumers are now empowered more than before, and with changing work patterns, they can more flexibly enjoy their leisure time. Given the maturity of economies, people now desire intangible products, such as experiences that are found especially in travel to faraway places, as they

have already possessed most of tangible products there can be. Additionally, the rapid advancement of technology gave birth to the information society, whose travelers can communicate, plan and decide anywhere, anytime, with all sorts of information available at their convenience (Bell et al., 2007, p. 8; European travel commission, 2006; Selwyn, 2005).

Furthermore, there is a growing concern about the physical and mental well-being of people, leading to a desire to extract the wellness benefits that come from nature and the outdoors. At the same time, there is a wish to return to nature, as the urban, modern lifestyle has separated us from the natural world. Finally, the increase in environmental and community awareness also serve as one of the core drivers that encouraged the unceasing growth of nature-based tourism. Not only are people becoming more and more keen on environmental issues, governments themselves are also put forth efforts to handle different environmental issues on a national and international level as well (Bell et al., 2007, p. 9-10).

Based on the research by Bell et al. (2007), there are also drivers associated with the environment. Increased urbanization, depopulation in rural areas combined with pressures faced by the environment, changes concerning the climate and economics of production have altogether altered the landscapes in various ways across countries. Landscapes also are continuously being abandoned in rural and peripheral areas, as people flock to cities searching for better means of income and higher life quality. Thus, the gentrification process leaves behind attractive places for recreation, as pollution is reduced and natural habitats multiply. Nevertheless, further development of nature-based tourism in such areas may face challenges, as those left behind are ill-equipped for tourism and infrastructure may be insufficient (MacDonald et al., 2000, as cited in Bell et al., 2007; Spencer, 1997, as cited in Bell et al., 2007). Climate change is another driver behind the demand flow for nature-based tourism. Bell et al. (2007) suggested that as the climate changes, wildlife features will in the process be affected. As a result, tourists are motivated to visit various natural areas before they disappear, such as the ice caps before they completely melt away and vanish (Bell et al., 2007, p. 10-11).

2.2 The tourism-nature interface

With tourism continuously builds on the marketing of nature and its resources, there exists a relationship between this industry and nature (Arnegger et al., 2010; Coghlan & Buckley, 2013; Urry, 1995). At the same time, the relationship between nature and tourism needs to be scrutinized through the lens of the ever-changing relationships of different modes of tourism production and consumption. These modes are embedded in social, cultural, economical and political context of time and place, as suggested by Gill (2018). Additionally, it is undeniable that very few tourism activities are independent on nature. For instance, a significant percentage of modern mass tourism has always relied heavily on the sun, sand and sea element (Butcher, 2003).

Due to the de-differentiation of tourism from our everyday life, which is typical of our contemporary society according to Uriely (2005), the different perceptions of nature created a wide range of experiences. These experiences attract numerous nature-based tourists, who pursue them due to their spirituality and authenticity found in untouched wilderness, or the adrenaline rush that adventure seekers are quite fond of (Meyer-Arendt, 2004). The tourism industry is responsible for the staging process of the tourist's perception and the experience that they may have in nature (McNamara & Prideaux, 2011). Such a task is achieved through the interventions of various producers, ranging from for instance tour operators to the authorities in charge of protected area managements, as well as the influence of popular culture forms (Markwell, 2001, p. 40).

The relationship between nature and tourism spans over a number of periods of social and cultural evolution, with two major historical antecedents being the most significant to its construction. The first antecedent is the influence of Romanticism emerged in the late 18th century, which holds a great impact on the western views regarding the aesthetics of nature, as well as the fact that conservation is an instrumental use of nature (Holden, 2003; Rees, 1975, as cited in Gill, 2018). Additionally, the rapid and unprecedented growth of tourism during the 1950s, combined with its environmental impact, is another important antecedent

for the construction of the nature-tourism relationship. The first engagement with nature for leisure-related purposes was first done by the elite members of society during the Classical times, through activities such as fishing and hunting (Meyer-Arendt, 2004).

Changes in societal taste and attitudes towards natural places did not occur until the Enlightenment and the subsequent scientific rationalization and industrialization in the late 18th century. The introduction of scenic pleasure touring among the English leisured class represented the notions of the picturesque, which was a response to modernity during the era where Romanticism reigned supreme (Gill, 2018). The attractions of natural theology persisted in Britain led to the introduction of new objects being exposed to the tourists' 'romantic gazes', turning their views and attention to wild landscapes, the mountains and the sea (Corbin, 1995; Rees, 1975, as cited in Gill, 2018; Urry, 1990). As a result, this construction of nature by the West paved a path to the early commodification of nature, as part of an emerging tourism industry (Cater, 2006; Gill, 2018).

One of the most major social phenomena of the modern era according to many is the exponential growth and democratization of tourism ever since the 1960s (Sharpley, 2009, p. 2). Mass tourism at such period of time followed the Fordist model of production and consumption, offering often package tourism that comes with well-organized travel infrastructure at a reasonable price. However, according to Gill (2018), with the unprecedented growth and mass international tourism activities comes severe environmental degradation, which attracted widespread attention. As a result, the impacts of tourism became the topic of academic interests concerning tourism studies across various disciplines (Xiao et al., 2013). In his publication, Cohen (1978) stated that the relationship between tourism and the natural environment, or at least the management of it, is either saving the environment for the tourist or from the tourists.

As such, the tourism-nature experiences the environmental paradox that is born from such simple dichotomous distinction (Gill, 2018). Tourism and its environmental impacts remained the topic of attention in several researches over the next several decades (e.g

Matheson & Wall, 1982; Pearce, 1985). After studies conducted by international agencies such as OECD that focused on the negative impacts of tourism on fragile ecosystems, by 1990s tourism impacts became a core topic in tourism research (Butler, 2004).

Regardless, Sharpley (2009) suggested that the debate and analysis on the topic concerning tourism negative impacts turned the industry into a scapegoat for consequences of economic growth. With the emergence of the sustainability paradigm in the 1980s, the conventional economic and political perception of the relationship between tourism and nature experienced changes. The introduction of the sustainability paradigm helped in diminishing the traditional and binary understanding of the positive economic benefits and negative environmental impacts associated with tourism. Moreover, such paradigm also enabled a wider range of interpretations that involve social and cultural perspectives (Saarinen, 2004; Williams & Lew, 2015).

As tourism scholars engaged with the discourse on sustainability, they also contributed to a better and even broader understanding of tourism within environmental and even social context (Holden, 2015; Sharpley, 2009). Furthermore, the interests, motivations and behavior patterns of nature-based tourists have also encouraged the academic realm to delve deeper into the relationship they have with nature (e.g Weaver & Lawton, 2002). As of the moment, the tourist gaze still remains an important element in Western construct, and the engagement of tourists with nature now involves also motivations related to physical wellness, social interaction, even heritage or identity discovery (Saarinen, 2014).

2.3 Current discourse for nature-tourism relationship

While terminologies, taxonomies and studies about tourism impacts were the focus of the academic world, there has been a shift of focus involving tourism-nature experience towards new conceptual and theoretical perspectives. These new conceptual and theoretical perspectives were brought forward through the introduction of cultural and critical turns that occurred in the field of social sciences (e.g Bianchi, 2009; Cohen & Cohen, 2012). Currently, the discourses concerning the relationship between nature and tourism comprises of current issues and concerns that express the post-modern perspectives on said relationship. Gill (2018) has divided such concerns and issues into three different categories, namely the experience economy that involves embodiment and performativity, political economy and ecology, as well as global environmental changes.

Embodiment and performativity as one experiences nature

Active promotion and commodification of the experience in nature, which is also part of the experience economy, has been a core element of the tourism consumption (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). The experience economy has also encouraged the emergence of new product that allow tourists to experience nature through novel means (Fennel et al., 2012; Oh et al., 2007, as cited in Gill, 2018; Shaw et al., 2000). According to Gill (2018), in the world of experience economy, through staged events, companies become involved with their consumers, which turns experiences into offerings for the market place. In the process, the consumers are captivated with how memorable the experiences they receive can be (Gill, 2018.) Nature-based tourism itself can now be seen as part of the experience economy, where urban-dwelling tourists create their own customized experience from various components and activities, instead of choosing standardized holidays (Coghlan & Buckley, 2013, p. 336).

Macnaghten & Urry (2000) stated that the expansion of the nature-based tourism sector shows that there is a global level of active engagement with nature, or with a natural setting when it comes to recreation. Such a trend originates from the influence of the Romantic Movement, promoted through the culture of nature, the spiritual and physical well-being that

is often associated with activities occur in natural and esthetically attractive areas (Macnaghten & Urry, 2000.)

Vespestad and Lindberg (2011) suggested that there exist four categories of experience that nature-based tourists actively pursue. These tourists search for the genuine, entertainment, while trying to discover their state of being as well as a sociocultural community (Vespestad & Lindberg, 2011.) Additionally, the demands for non-consumptive wildlife tourism suggests the possibility of a reawakening of our deeper ecological sub-consciousness. Studies show that as our society experiences the continuous process of urbanization, the disconnection from nature ignited our fascination for nature and its wonders (Curtin & Kragh, 2014, p. 545; Reynolds & Braithwaite, 2001.) As a result, there are multisensory interactions as well as emotional responses to wildlife (e.g Hill et al., 2014).

Thus, according to Hill et al. (2014), the way the tourist's body engages with their surrounding biophysical environment depicts their human-nature experience. At the same time, this diverse experience they have with nature can potentially awake certain responses from them (Hill et al., 2014, p. 83.) Furthermore, current understanding of the benefits of nature (particularly in therapeutic landscapes) is moving toward understanding places where embodied engagement happens. Apart from providing a chance to breath in fresh air and exercise, these places also allow the possibility to reconnect with the past when nature was closer to us (Little, 2012, p. 266). Nature then can be constructed as the environment that permits escape and the feeling of freedom (Edensor, 2000).

Political economy and political ecology

Political economy, and political ecology in particular, is perceived as being suitable theoretical constructs needed for critical examination of the tourism-nature relationship (Bramwell, 2007, 2011; Duffy, 2015; Mosedale, 2016). The perspective of political ecology is based on environmental ethics, which deconstructs the tourism-nature relationship in an expensive yet substantial manner. As a result, the often-hidden contradictions among different political ideologies, which tend to generate inequities in tourism-nature relationship,

are revealed (Gill, 2018). Additionally, in the global realm of neoliberalism, tourism continues to redesign and repackage nature due to global consumption (Duffy & Moore, 2010, p. 738). Thus, tourism and its purposes have strongly influenced the process of commodifying and marketizing nature (Holden, 2009; Mosedale, 2015; Münster & Münster, 2012). Nonetheless, it is necessary to be aware of the market's dynamics to comprehend the level of interdependence and destructiveness regarding the tourism-nature relationship (Holden, 2009, p. 375).

In the realm of neoliberalism, the commodifying process stated above is justified by having tourism being an ecological service that introduces various benefits for society, ranging from health-related to cultural and economic needs. At the same time, tourism is also seen as a method of nature conservation while being able to stimulate economic growth (Duffy, 2013; Fletcher & Neves, 2012; Igoe et al., 2010). It should also be noted that neoliberalizing nature can also lead to the commodification of other integral parts, meaning that the integrity of the ecosystem might face dangers (Igoe et al., 2010). To summarize, adopting the perspective of political ecology can unravel how society at large engages with nature, as well as factors that alter this relationship (Gill, 2018). The engagement with political economy, as well as political ecology, allows an interdisciplinary means of comprehending the complexity of the dynamics between different stakeholders. This is particularly important in the context of developing economies for instance, where the power is unevenly distributed and social struggles over natural resources might be a common occurrence (Bramwell, 2007; Douglas, 2014; Gössling, 2002).

Global environmental change

According to Gill (2018), climate is a vital component that can leave an impact, either negative or positive, on the tourist experience and even on the natural resources needed by the tourism industry. Nevertheless, it was not until 2003 when the first International Conference on Climate Change and Tourism was held that concern about climate change became more robust. It should also be noted that there was also early concern in tourism research about issues related to the climate during the late 1980s (Gill, 2018.) Since society

becomes more alert about tourism's contribution to the greenhouse gas emission, research about such dilemma has experienced a boost in the recent years as a result (Holden, 2015; Scott, 2011; Scott, Gössling & Hall, 2011). Gill (2018) also stated that climate changes reveal the paradoxical relationships that the tourists have with the natural environment. On one hand, changes of the natural environment due to climate change will alter how tourists will utilize natural resources. As a response, research will then strive to identify strategies for vulnerability and adaptability aimed for sensitive ecosystems, such as the mountains or marine environments (Gill, 2018).

Per Gill (2018), increased international travels means higher contribution to anthropogenic climate change via air travels, which leads to an emphasis on researching about the behavioral responses of tourists. However, both tourists and even the tourism industry are expected to exhibit different methods of adaptation to climate change given how tourism has become an essential element of the 21st century lifestyle. International tourist travel and its contribution to airline emission remains a major concern related to tourism and climate change. This concern is further reinforced with the emergence of low-cost airlines which prompts leisure air travel to become more frequent, especially in industrialized countries (Gill, 2018.) While there has been a widespread recognition of how air mobility has an impact on the environment, there is a reluctance to change one's flying behavior among tourists (Cohen et al., 2011). The impact of climate change can both lead to decreased tourism activities in many destinations, while simultaneously encourage tourists to participate in 'last-chance tourism' (Gill, 2018; Hall, 2010;). Destinations that rely on different forms of nature-tourism may face difficulties being on the receiving end of climate change (Gill, 2018).

Thus, as stated by Gill (2018), the relationship between tourism and nature, as well as its changes, reflects the changes in society's attitude and behavior that are a result of the shift from Fordism to post-Fordism. Additionally, the emergence of the sustainability paradigm during the late 1980s also contributed to the changes in the tourism-nature interface, and especially in the realm of academy and policies. With the global impacts of climate change remaining significant, tourism studies have also shifted their focus towards researching about

the possible alterations brought forth by climate-related issues. Consequently, there have been progress concerning research aimed towards the comprehension of the relationship that tourism has with nature (Gill, 2018.) Regardless, whether these researches have brought about actual influences on real-world changes remain questionable (Bramwell & Lane, 2012, p. 2). There appears to be a division in the academic realm of tourism, with the willing embrace of the market on one hand while questions regarding discourse, culture and representation remains on the other hand (Bianchi, 2009, p. 484).

Gill (2018) proposed that the impacts of global environmental changes also prompt the appearance of the political ecology paradigm. Embracing the environmental ethics, the political paradigm assists with a better understanding of the connections between nature and tourism on a global scale. The current paradigms of sustainable tourism are both vague in concepts and does not have a concrete interpretation. These paradigms are still at their core based on ‘linearity, predictability, and stability, and dominated by tourism-centric economic development imperatives at the destination level’. As a result, they become excessively simplistic (Gill, 2018.) Thus, the next objective is to determine who and where will be responsible for the path to reach a sustainable future.

Therefore, as concluded by Gill (2018), to manage the tourism-nature interface, it is necessary to acknowledge the challenges related to the stakeholder, namely their values, preferences and behaviors. Nevertheless, it is worth to also keep in mind that human values and ethics will vary over time and space due to the diversity of the stakeholders. Moreover, while these values reflect the ethical concerns in the recent decades, they do not showcase the global tourism behavior patterns whose demands and global ecological footprint are rapidly developing (Gill, 2018).

3. THE HUMAN SENSES

3.1 The senses from the perspective of phenomenology

In her work, Malabou (2014) discussed that the body became a relevant topic of attention in the realm of philosophy when the question becomes “my body”, instead of just “the body”. Husserl was the first individual to bring forth the distinction between the anatomico-physiological body (*Körper*), and one’s own body (*Leib*). In other words, *Leib* is the living body that houses our sensations and emotions, our “flesh”. With his distinction, Husserl in the process set the body free from being seen as an object of conceptual devaluation, he assigned a constitutive role to the “flesh”. To achieve such a task, Husserl rejected the approaches of descriptive psychology, which also allowed him to build the foundation of transcendental phenomenology (Malabou, 2014, p. 13).

As stated in Malabou (2014), in Husserl’s approach, it is required to consider one’s body in its purest form, be it individuality, incarnation or embodiment (*Verleiblichung*). As a result, this leads to the consideration of one’s living corporeal body in the purest means of manifestation (*le vécu corporel*) (Malabou, 2014, p. 13.) The body then acts as a symbol of one’s immediate presence in the world, which offers the mind hyletic data, or sensory matter in other words (Malabou, 2014, p. 13; Williford, 2013, p. 501). Therefore, Husserlian analyses somewhat blurs the line that separates the mind and the body, meaning that there is now a corporeal spatiality born from the closeness of the mind and the flesh that it enlivens (Malabou, 2014, p. 14).

Husserl’s findings were continued by Merleau-Ponty, who believed Husserl has not delved deep enough into his discovery regarding the body-world interactions (Malabou, 2014, p. 14). According to Bullington (2013), during his philosophical research, Merleau-Ponty focuses on the materiality of the body and its consciousness. Merleau-Ponty approached the body as a subjective being- the lived body, and paid attention to the dialogue that the body exchanges constantly with the world. Contrary to Husserl who believed consciousness is the center of

subjectivity, Merleau-Ponty introduced the body to phenomenology as a constituted subject. He believes that everyone is a being in this world whose mind and body are in unity, which contradicts the Cartesian dualism (Bullington, 2013, p. 26-27).

To explain about the senses in a phenomenological sense, I will refer to the article written by Meacci and Liberatore (2015), which explains the senses from a phenomenological point of view, albeit the context is the tourism experience. From a phenomenological perspective, the process one goes through to experience the world includes sequence of steps that transform the event into the experience (Volo, 2009). The first stage of the process involves the senses, which happens through physical stimuli triggered by the event. This step is continued when the receptor cells of the sensory organs receive signals of intrusion. The next stage in the process is perception, which involves steps required for interpretations of the sensation. This phase is also understood as a sense-making phase, which occurs to understand what the senses try to communicate with us (Larsen, 2007). Perception has specific influences on one's emotions, which are related to feelings and cognition and include awareness, reasoning and judgement (Krishna, 2012). This phase also allows one to make their own interpretations and to internalize the experience (Meacci & Liberatore, 2015).

Yet at the same time, from a phenomenological approach, the bodily senses are also seen as being unsuitable for a naturalist understanding (Küpers, 2013, p. 327). Popular thinking sees the senses as raw data, or input in some cases, for the information processing of cognitive procedures, or a disembodied and functional brain (Varela et al., 1991). One reason for this reductionist approach is the doubtfulness regarding the practicality of sensory knowledge (Gagliardi, 1996, p. 566). Küpers (2013) suggested that such prejudice originates from the empiricists and rationalists who believes there is a need of application of specific framing and taming of reason, all of which are for a reliable construction of the world. Yet, explanations offered from a behavioristic-empiristic or mentalistic-idealistic approach cannot fully unravel the body. These approaches believe that the body and the senses are passive receivers of sensory impressions, which are either controlled or treated as an extension of our mind (Küpers, 2013, p. 327).

Phenomenology contradict such approaches by seeing the senses as entwined parts of the bodies, being part of also their embodiment and interplay. Therefore, the senses are not to be seen as isolated factors or tidbits of information (Küpers, 2013, p. 327; Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 236). Küpers (2013) stated that from the perspective of phenomenology, the senses and sensual experience make up a mediating embodiment that blurs the line between what is ‘inside’ and ‘outside’. Thus, within a common and embodied place and time, it is possible for the sensible and perceptive bodies to, for instance, see and be seen, make sound and be heard. This means such embodiment can cross over a variety of sensory modes (Küpers, 2013, p. 327).

Küpers (2013) further suggested that sensual qualities become the constitutor and mediator of meaningful interactions for embodied beings, via different sensual interplay of bodies, experiences as well as sense-based situations. Additionally, the senses should not be seen merely as material substances, as mere objects or the total of the different 5 bodily senses of the physiological corpus. It is through the living bodies that one can sense the complete embodied situation, with the bodies orientating, making indications and framing different socio-cultural experiences. The body along with the embodiment processes transform ‘sensitiveness’ into sensibility and meanings. In other words, human beings ‘make sense’ of the realities and the ongoing process of reality transmutation, with the body and the senses acting as mediators of such a process (Küpers, 2013, p. 327).

3.2 The senses across different disciplines

Senses and their contribution to the human knowledge first appeared as a topic of reflection in the field of philosophy (Aristotle, 2001; Plato, 2003). In fact, the relationship between the sense and the mind has received varying philosophical approaches that emerge based on different historic periods (Agapito et al., 2013, p. 63). With his idealism, Plato (2003) believes that reality can only be found in the world of ideas, and that the physical world perceived through the senses are to some extent deceptive. Aristotle (2001), however,

suggested that our knowledge begins with sensual perception, or in other words, when apprehension of the external world occurs. The philosopher himself also created the hierarchy of the senses, with sight being the most dominant sense. This hierarchy then continues with hearing, smell, taste and touch (Aristotle, 2001).

Aristotle's perspective is developed further by Spinoza in the 16th century, who claims that the human mind and the body cannot be separated (Damásio, 2003a). Aristotle's idea of knowledge begins with the senses persists until the Enlightenment time, which was then defended and further developed by Kant. The philosopher believes that the "phenomenon" (reality inside the mind) is not the same as "noumenon" (the thing in itself, or the actual reality) (Agapito et al., 2013, p. 63). During the second half of the 1800s, with his work, Husserl dedicated his focus to the interactions that a person has with the surrounding world, which led to the foundation of the school of Phenomenology (Welton, 2003). During the 20th century, Merleau-Ponty, rejecting the Cartesian dualism, stated that one's body contributes to one's perception of the world (Merleau-Ponty, 2002).

According to Craig (2003) and Damásio (2003b), neuroscience has also suggested that apart from exteroceptive senses, which include sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch, the sensory signals that our brain receives can also originate from the interoceptive senses (internal body or our body awareness in other words). The interoceptive system comprises of the sense of movement via our musculoskeletal system (Proprioceptive sense), our sense of balance (vestibular), visceral sense, and the sense of pain and temperature (Craig, 2003; Damásio, 2003b.) The latest findings in neuroscience has led to the acknowledgement of the paradigm of embodiment, which suggests the integration of the mind and the body (Agapito et al, 2013, p. 63).

According to Damásio (2009), the factual knowledge that we require for reasoning and decision-making takes on the form of images in our mind. Appearing in all sensorial varieties, ranging from sounds to even pains and pleasures, these images refer to all object and action that are processed in our brain, be it in the present, in the past, and even if they are imagined

The human sensory sensors capture the external stimuli, which contributes to one's formation of perceptual images that are used in the perception process of events (Damásio, 2009.) Additionally, during the recalling process, apart from assessing these perceptual images, there also occur reinterpretation and reconstruction of lived events as well (Damásio, 2010). To some extent, regardless of sensory modality, perception is the product of the mapping skills of our brain, leading to the creation of a mind (Damásio, 2010).

Agapito et al. (2013) suggested that from the perspective of psychology, particularly sensory psychology, the sensation we feel is connected to various mental processes that are required for detecting the surrounding world. When a sensor receptor is stimulated, a pattern of neural messages is created to represent the stimulus that is in our brain. As a result, this initiates our experience of a stimulus. On the other hand, perceptual psychology attempts to create a connection between our perception and the mental processes by which it is possible to interpret and attach personal meanings to possible sensory patterns (Agapito et al., 2013, p. 64).

Therefore, it can be concluded that senses from the perspective of psychology are seen as an important factor for one's experience and even behavior (Davis & Palladino, 2000; Goldstein, 2010; Zimbardo et al., 2011). It is also worth mentioning that individuals experience the effects of the senses differently, which results in varying responses to sensory stimuli (Sheehan, 1967, as cited in Krishna, 2010). Furthermore, perceptual deprivation of one sense can result in enhancements for the remaining senses, which can affect how one can experience the world with the possible lack of one or more senses (e.g Sacks, 2005).

Human senses in the realm of sensuous geographies are seen as the mediators in geographical experience, which aids us in our understanding of space, place and time (Rodaway, 1994). The human senses help make sense of the world through actively structuring the information that is extracted from the source of information, which is the environment around us (Agapito et al., 2013, p. 64). It should be noted that while everyday classification attaches specific sensory impression to specific organ, this is not necessarily always possible (Rodaway, 1994).

The reason, as suggested by Rodaway (1994), is due to the complexity of sense organs, and the fact that some of the senses tend to operate closely together.

Additionally, as stated in Rodaway (1994)'s work, a number of researchers have come to disagree with the domination of vision in human geography. Instead, there is an emphasis on the role of other senses when it comes to environmental perception, as one's perception can also include auditory, olfactory and tactile components as well (Rodaway, 1994, p. 26). As such, it can be concluded that geographical encounters can be multisensory in nature, which can be found in tourism destinations (Crouch, 2002; Degen, 2008; Rodaway, 1994;). Therefore, senses can to some extent enhance the visitor's attachment to the destination (e.g Casey, 1996; Tuan, 1977).

Howes (2006) stated in his work that it has been akin to a tradition that psychology and neurobiology are responsible for studying and acquiring an understanding of the senses. At the same time these academic disciplines, due to their focus on cognitive and neurological aspects of the senses, omitted the possible cultural meanings of the senses in the process. Nevertheless, there has been a revolution in how the senses can be studied, as sensorium is believed to be a social construct. A growing number of researches also demonstrate that different cultures and different periods of history perceive and experience the senses in varying manners. In fact, the senses become a topic of interest for cultural studies is a result of a number of paradigms shifts in social sciences and humanities, which occurred over the last forty years (Howes, 2006).

From the perspectives of sociology and anthropology, whose approaches to the senses are to some extent similar, our body receptors are a means to culturally connect us to social existence (Dewey, 1934; Howes, 2005; Simmel, 1997; Vannini et al., 2011). From a cultural and social perspective, instead of being only physically related, sensory perceptions also originate from a learned pattern of behaviors (Agapito et al., 2013, p. 64; Classen, 1997; Howes, 1991, 2005, 2006). The senses in this context are produced by place and time, as the

way with which people experience sensory stimulations can change based on different historical periods (Smith, 2007, p. 3).

3.3 Senses in the context of tourism

López and Sánchez (2011) suggested that tourism is driven by sight, which in the process blurs the significance of the other senses. As a result, the traveler's seemingly primary activity when they travel is to gaze upon, to observe the unfamiliar scenery, architecture and perhaps exhibitions at the destinations they visit. Thus, there is the implicit implication that the tourist does not necessarily utilize all of their senses to the fullest extent when they embark on a journey to another destination (López & Sánchez, 2011, p. 63.) Richards, Pritchard and Morgan (2010) stated that the success of the tourist gaze has both captured the tourism academy, while also defining the studies that came after its publication.

Although efforts have been made to gain an insight on embodiment and the senses in tourism, the studies in this field still pays heavy attention to the gaze (Richards, Pritchard & Morgan, 2010, p. 1099.) The focus on visual component, as suggested by Selanne (2001), comes from the hierarchy of the senses in the philosophical tradition of the West. Nevertheless, there have been studies that claim the visual component does not necessarily dominate the tourist experiences (Adler, 1989; Markwell, 2001; Pocock, 2010). As geographical encounters imply a multisensory experience, tourists then bodily engage in the process of sense making during their encounter with different destinations (Crouch, 2002).

Pritchard and Morgan (2011) suggest that tourism is a form of commoditized pleasures, which are sensual and embodied. Additionally, the authors also state that through the sense organs, we come to experience the world in various ways. Additionally, according to Urry (2002), we seek to indulge in physical appetites and even search for a specific place for our holidays, all in hopes of finding intense pleasures. These pleasures are of a different scale, or that they can involve numerous different senses compared to those that we tend to encounter daily (Urry, 2002, p. 3.) In his study, Small (2007) offers an example of how tourists portray

their lived holiday experience through remembering how the meat was sizzling, and how sweet the water drawn from a well tasted. Therefore, the tourist experience is a series of embodied, physical encounter where all the senses are utilized (Richards, Pritchard & Morgan, 2010, p. 1100).

As stated in previous subchapter, numerous academic publications have considered about how the senses have helped us reach knowledge and understanding of the world. Such a task is achieved through the information on the surrounding environment, as well as through the mediation on everyday experiences (Howes, 2005; Krishna, 2010; Rodaway, 1994). In the context of tourism, the correct devising of sensory stimuli, during the process of shaping appealing tourist experience, can assist with boosting competitiveness and sustainability of destinations (Mossberg, 2007; Tung & Ritchie, 2011).

In their work, Agapito et al. (2014) suggest the importance and relevance of the experiential approach during the phase of conceptualizing, planning and marketing of the tourist experience. Moreover, a number of researches also highlighted that experiential approach, apart from outlining the significance behind hedonic consumption, emphasizes the necessity of paying attention to devising appropriate multi-sensory environment. By doing so, there will be contribution to the value creation process for both the consumers and the companies (Addis & Holbrook, 2001; Gentile, Spiller, & Noci, 2007; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Pine & Gilmore, 1998.) Thus, stimulation of the senses is an essential element in the marketing process of unique and appealing consumer experiences (Krishna, 2012; Schmitt, 1999; Schmitt & Simonson, 1997).

Empirical studies have proven the importance of the sensory aspect of the consumer experiences, emphasizing that the senses assist with the process of engaging and value-cocreation with consumers (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009; Gentile et al., 2007). Additionally, examining the sensory information can lead to core themes needed to coordinate experiential offerings of a tourism destination (Gretzel & Fesenmaier, 2003, 2010; Pan & Ryan, 2009). Pan and Ryan (2009) discovered a shift of sensory impressions for

destination experiences through analyzing a number of journalists' travelogues. Furthermore, these sensory shifts occurred due to spatial changes, which means their research implies that there is the possibility to manage sensory appeals for destinations experiences (Pan & Ryan, p. 209.) Such alterations are made possible via focusing on certain activities and sensory itineraries based on the tourists' profiles and especially their motivations (Agapito et al., 2014, p. 227).

It should also be noted that studies that address urban environment are more common to be found, whereas rural settings make non-visual impressions more profound (Dann & Jacobsen, 2003; Pan & Ryan, 2009). Nevertheless, there exist a number of studies that see rural settings as an essential element in their analysis of the tourist's sensory experiences (Agapito et al., 2012; Gretzel & Fesenmaier, 2010; Kastenholz et al., 2012). It has been suggested that the abundance of endogenous resources that can be found in rural areas allows different tourists 'motivations to be fulfilled via various activities (Kastenholz, Davis & Paul, 1999; Pan & Ryan, 2009; Roberts & Hall, 2004). Thus, rural environment becomes ideal for the process of conceptualizing touristic experiences, as such environment is able to stimulate numerous senses (Kastenholz et al., 2012).

As pointed out by Agapito et al. (2013), the current tourism literature acknowledges the importance of both visual and non-visual senses, and their importance to the tourist experience. However, there is still a need for empirical studies with a holistic approach to the multisensory nature of the global tourist experience (Agapito et al., 2013, p. 67.) At the moment, the methodologies that are used in empirical research with a holistic approach to the importance of the senses towards the tourist experience vary. Some studies utilize qualitative methods, while others integrate qualitative and quantitative methods (e.g Dann & Dann, 2011; Kastenholz et al., 2012;).

The phasic nature of the tourist experiences also allows different means of researching its sensory dimension (Agapito et al., 2013, p. 69). For instance, a number of researchers decide to examine the sensory impressions during the tourist's visit at the destination (e.g Markwell,

2001; Son & Pearce, 2005). On the other hand, some researchers attempt to ask tourists to describe their desired experiences for specific destinations (e.g Gretzel & Fesenmaier, 2003). Furthermore, some researchers delve into this matter through analyzing tourist experience in a posteriori manner (e.g Dann & Dann, 2011; Pan & Ryan, 2009). Therefore, the purpose and managerial implications of the research will determine the methodology of the research (Agapito et al., 2013, p. 69).

4. THE PROCESS OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 A phenomenological approach

During the ideological crisis that emerged at the end of World War One, Edmund Husserl established a new philosophical method that would offer absolute certainty to a civilization in turmoil (Eagleton, 1983, p. 54). Vandenberg (1997) stated that Husserl was not the first individual to consider such a method, as before him, there were Kant and Hegel. Nonetheless, Husserl is still considered to be the leading figure in the twentieth century in the realm of phenomenology (Vandenberg, 1997, p. 11.) Groenewald (2004) stated that Husserl disregarded the belief where objects are existing in the external world independently, and the fact that its information is reliable. Certainty is achieved when everything that is not within the realm of immediate experience is disregarded, meaning the external world then is about the contents of the personal consciousness. Therefore, from a Husserlian approach, realities are known as “phenomena”, which also are the absolute data (Groenewald, 2004, p. 43.) As a result, phenomenology is the science that scrutinizes phenomena, whose aim is to return to the concrete (Eagleton, 1983, p. 55-56; Kruger, 1988, p. 28; Moustakas, 1994, p. 26).

Husserl got the basis for phenomenology from Franz Brentano, who emphasized the intentional nature of consciousness (Holloway, 1997, p. 117). According to Groenewald (2004), later on Martin Heidegger, who was a student of Husserl, brought forward the concept of “*Dasein*” (Being there), as well as the dialogue between an individual and the world around them. Thus, Husserl and Heidegger made attempts at unraveling the “lived world” (“*Lebenswelt*”) in regard to one’s average existence in an ordinary world (Schwandt, 1997). The idea was further advanced by Alfred Schultz, who believed that there exist a multitude of territories of meanings (Vandenberg, 1997, p. 7).

Heidegger’s findings were persisted by others, among whom are Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Vandenberg, 1997). Therefore, according to Lester (1999), phenomenology offers an approach aims at shedding light on phenomena via the way they

are perceived by different individuals in a situation. As a result, phenomenology assists with gathering deep information through a variety of qualitative methods ranging from interviews to participant observation. The focus of phenomenology is the study of experiences, especially as seen from the perspective of the individual, and conducts “bracketing” of assumptions and ways of perception that are often taken for granted (Lester, 1999).

As suggested by Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) and van Manen (2001), phenomenology also pays attention to how specific things may appear to an individual as part of their experience. Thus, a phenomenological approach allows the researcher to discover the crucial components of different phenomena or experiences, and what sets them apart from others. The use of an eidetic reduction allows phenomenologists to distinguish how a phenomenon become special and unique to different individuals. Consequently, phenomenology and its studies emphasize how objects and events are perceived, instead of providing a description of phenomena according to predetermined categorial system or scientific requirements. It can be concluded that phenomenology offers a way to obtain a deeper understanding of the nature and meaning behind the everyday experiences. This approach does not aim to provide effective theory that can be used to explain and control our world. Instead, phenomenology allows the possibility to achieve a reasonable perception through which one can establish a more intimate connection with the surrounding world (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; van Manen, 2001, p. 9.)

Van Manen (2017) stated that from the perspective of epistemology, phenomenological approaches are deeply rooted in personal knowledge and subjectivity. As a result, personal perspective and interpretation hold significant relevance and prove to be beneficial in the understanding of subjective experience. The realm of phenomenological research has some common areas with other qualitative approaches, such as ethnography, hermeneutics and symbolic interactionism. Pure phenomenology, on the other hand, does not seek to explain but rather to provide a description. What sets phenomenology apart from other qualitative inquiry in the way it tries to obtain descriptions of how one experiences the world pre-reflectively. In other words, it seeks to acquire a description of how we experience the world that is free from any means of taxonomizing, classifying, conceptualizing, and so on (van

Manen, 2017.) Additionally, phenomenology involves a perspective that is not involved with hypothesis and/ or any preconceptions (Husserl, 1970; Lester, 1999). Methods associated with phenomenology are suitable for the purpose of bringing forward individuals' perceptions and experiences, as seen from their own perspectives. In the process, this also breaks free from the structural or normative assumptions (Lester, 1999).

Van Manen (2017), via a Husserlian point of view, explained that phenomenological research attempts to clarify the structures of phenomena as they manifest in our consciousness. As such, phenomenology is interested in anything that falls within the realm of the consciousness, regardless whether it is real or the level of subjectivity that comes along with how it is perceived. Hence, anything that is not within the realm of consciousness falls outside of the boundaries of the possible lived experiences. Phenomenology then is a systematic attempt at discovering and providing a description the internal meaning structures behind lived experience, either intuited or achieved via studies concerning lived experiences (van Manen, 2017.) The data analysis process in phenomenology comprises of identifying common meanings and essences (*epokhé*), horizontalization of data, and textual and structural analysis (Moustakas, 1994). Padilla-Díaz (2015) explained that the phenomenological analysis requires a description and analysis of the text to reach an interpretation of the context. Additionally, analysis and interpretations are expected to aim towards specific search activities regarding descriptions, contexts, possible discourses, as well as meanings and essences (Padilla-Díaz, 2015, p. 105-106).

4.2 Obtaining data through thematic semi-structured interviews

Before setting out to gather necessary materials and data for my thesis, the first step I needed to consider was the decision of an appropriate methodology. As my research involves the subjective topic of one's experience, I decided that a phenomenological approach is suitable. As stated previously, a phenomenological approach allows the researcher to gather deep information via numerous qualitative methods, ranging from interviews to participant observation (Lester, 1999). Additionally, I also utilized qualitative research methods, as they

aim at providing a description and understanding via letting the participant communicate about their own experience in their own words, which can be captured through observation and interviews (Yilmaz, 2013, p. 313). With such points in mind, I decided that conducting interviews would be a good choice for gathering materials and necessary data for analysis.

Particularly, in the context of this research, I utilized thematic semi-structured interviews to get an access to the participant's experience of nature. I constructed the themes for the interview based on the theories and the concepts I have encountered when I first began my research process. These themes serve as the foundation on which I built my interview questions, as well as the framework of my interviews. During the literature review phase, I got the opportunity to acquaintance myself with the concepts concerning nature-based tourism and sensory experiences. As a result, I assigned them to be the central themes of my interview and built my question around them (refer to appendix 2).

Furthermore, the reason why I deemed semi-structured interview to be a suitable data gathering method is due to its flexibility. As stated by Edwards and Hollands (2013), typical semi-structured interview involves a list of questions of topics that the researcher wishes to cover, but it is possible to decide how and when these questions can be asked, and the way the interviewees can respond. This type of interview often lets interviewees answer in any manner they wish to, with a less rigorous structure that provides comparison if there are more than one interviews conducted (Edwards & Hollands, 2013, p. 30.) From the perspective of a phenomenological research, this is beneficial given how one can delve as deep as possible into another person's lived experience.

In total, I managed to conduct four different interviews, with a total number of 10 different interviewees. Out of the four interviews, two of them were conducted as group interviews, one was conducted with a pair, and one was a one-on-one interview. All of the interviews were conducted in Rovaniemi, between the period of March-April 2018. Through the recommendation of my supervisor, I got into contact with a company named Beyond Arctic, whose specialty was photography tourism. After reaching an agreement, the staffs at Beyond

Arctic agreed to help with arranging interview sessions with their client, as long as the client themselves were willing to participate, and if there was enough time. This also influenced the number of interviews I got, as well as choice of interviewees as Beyond Arctic was akin to my gateway to reach out to potential interviewees.

Nevertheless, the basic criteria I had in mind for my interviewees were that they had reasonable knowledge of English. All of the interviews were conducted after the interviewees have returned from their trip with Beyond Arctic, and as café Koti was right next to where the company is, I decided to conduct the interviews there. To make it easier to follow, I have created a table that shows the basic information about the interviewees as seen in table 1.

Table 1 *The list of interviewees*

Identifier	Gender	Country	Travel purpose
I1	Female	Germany	As a side trip from business trip
I2	Female	Germany	As a side trip from business trip
I3	Male	Belgium	Birthday trip
I4	Female	Belgium	Holiday
I5	Female	Australia	Holiday
I6	Female	UK	Holiday
I7	Female	UK	Holiday
I8	Female	UK	Holiday
I9	Male	UK	Holiday
I10	Female	Spain	Holiday

At the beginning of every interview, I gave out to all of my interviewees letter of consent and copies of my interview questions. I then gave them some time for themselves to go through both the questions and the information about the research that I was doing. Furthermore, we only started if the interviewees consented to be part of my research. I conducted my first interview on 17th of March 2018 with a couple from Germany (I1 and I2), who were in

Rovaniemi as a side trip after they had completed their business trip in Oulu. I requested to interview them through Beyond Arctic, and later on we met at café Koti after their return from the trip. Originally, I also brought along a survey version of my research questions and asked if they could fill in anything else that was on their mind. However, as there was nothing else to be said after our interview session, I decided to omit this part in later interviews. As the interviewees were both quite eager to share their story about the experience they had that day, the first interview was quite successful.

The next interview happened on 26th March 2018, this time the interviewees consisted of a couple from Belgium (I3 and I4), and one traveler from Australia (I5). Similar to my first interview, I was introduced to them via Beyond Arctic after they returned from their trip. We then agreed to have our interview at café Koti since it was close by. While there was a thin language barrier this time, all the interviewees were willing to discuss about their experience, with I3 and I4 offering some of their personal insight as well. As such, the interview was also a success. I conducted my third interview on early April 2018, which was my only one-on-one interview. The participant this time was a traveler from Spain, and perhaps it was due to the language barrier, we only managed to touch the surface of her experience. My last interview session was conducted on 16th April 2018, this time the interviewees were a group of students travelling to Rovaniemi from the UK. As soon as the group came back to Beyond Arctic's office, we agreed to meet at café Koti for our interview. Each interviewee offered some of their observation and input, all of which was valuable for my analysis.

All of my interviews were recorded using a recorder that I retrieved myself. Each interview lasted between 20 to 45 minutes, depending on how much the interviewees wanted to share their experience, or whether they were in a hurry or not. After I recorded the interview session, I later on transcribed them and used the transcription for analysis. I along with the participants encountered some difficulties during our interview sessions, with the main challenge being the language barrier. Additionally, it also occurred to me later on that some of the interviewees did not fully understand the questions, for which I had to explain to them the questions in a simplified manner. While café Koti provided a relaxed, casual atmosphere that

helped with the flow of our conversation, the background noises proved to be a problem especially on busy days. In general, I believe I have obtained in-depth and rich data from my interview sessions, as most of the interviewees were quite open about the experience they have had in nature with Beyond Arctic.

4.3 The analysis process

For the analysis process, I decided to utilize the disciplines and methods included in interpretative phenomenological analysis. Interpretative phenomenological analysis aims to explore how participants make sense of their experiences, how they attach meanings to different events and states (Smith & Osborn, 2007, p. 53.) As such, this approach is beneficial for my research, as it is my attempt to gain an insight of how the participants make sense of their experience in nature. After some consideration, I decided to proceed with my research through a number of steps. The first step involves the identification of my own pre-understanding of the phenomenon under study, namely how nature is experienced through the senses. After having discovered my own preconception, I proceed with conducting semi-structured interviews and transcribe the records in order to acquire necessary research material.

After having done transcription for the interviews, I began to highlight and select different phrases that indicate the possible effects that concern the participant's senses when they are surrounded by nature. Afterwards, I created a table for common usage for the analysis of the interview transcription, based on the different senses, as well as the effects they have, or how they are affected under different factors. In the table, I gave each sense mental influences and physical influences. Additionally, after having decided where the selected phrases from the interview transcriptions should be in the chart, I would then decide on how important a sense is toward the overall experience of the participant. The scale of the importance of the senses start from the lowest with not very important, to the highest being very important, and secondary as medium importance. After I have done everything, I would then create a summary on how the sense in general affect the experience of the participants, while

simultaneously taking into account how the participants themselves summarized the sensory influences.

Table 2 *Framework of data analysis*

Interview date			Interviewee identification	
Sense	Mental influence	Physical influence	Importance towards customer's experience	Summary of the influence on the overall experience
Sight				
Hearing				
Smell				
Taste				
Touch				

I have come to notice during the interview process that the sensual influence does not necessarily apply to the body only, as the mind also receives some forms of an impact as well. For instance, although they feel numb in their feet while being in such cold climate, the participants at the same time felt at ease, being away from their work and responsibilities. It occurred to me then that physical influences might not be the only influence that I must interpret, as clearly, the person felt something beyond the boundaries of physical sensation. As a result, what was originally “general influences” was divided into two different categories of mental and physical influences. The analysis process then became easier, as during the transcription procedure an abundance of data appeared that pointed towards the mental state of the participants as well.

The fourth column (“importance towards customer’s experience”) was created for the purpose of deciding the level of importance that one sense has over the participant’s overall experience. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, each of the sense would receive a rating of importance that varies between “not very important” to “very important”, with

secondary being the medium. The last column (“summary of the influence on the overall experience”) is where I try to summarize the overall effect that one sense has on the participant’s experience. This process is done while also considering what was mentioned by the participants themselves during the interview sessions. As there are 5 different senses, I have divided the table into 5 different rows, with each row being occupied by one sense. The next step to be taken after having designed the table is to decide how and where the data would be placed.

Although I managed to gather considerably decent information, I also encountered some obstacles during the analysis process. It happened that some of the participants did not disclose enough information concerning the importance or the effects that the senses have on their experience. In some cases, they also offered a rather vague or generic answer when it came to the overall influence that the senses have on their experience, or how they felt under certain conditions. As a result, an “x” is placed in places where information regarding the effects of the senses is not available or in places where I was unable to generate a summary for the sensual importance owing to a lack of concrete answers. Additionally, “not identified” is shown where the importance of the senses was not given by the participant. On top of that, it was difficult to summarize the effects that the senses have on the participant’s experience without assuming how they felt, hence the reason why I decided to complete this step through fleshing out what was mentioned by the participants during the interview sessions.

4.4 My pre-understanding of the phenomenon in question

From the perspective of phenomenology, to access the truth of matters, the researcher is required to describe the phenomena as precisely as possible how they manifest themselves to his or her consciousness (Moran, 2000, p. 4). Moran (2000) stated that it is essential to not place any impositions derived from numerous matters, such as common sense or even science, on the experience in advance. Any form of explanations for the phenomena thus cannot be imposed before the phenomena is understood in its purest essence (Moran, 2000, p. 4.) Moreover, phenomenology also requires the researcher to focus on the nature of

consciousness as it is experienced, instead of how it is portrayed and framed by common sense and philosophical traditions (Moran, 2000, p. 6). Additionally, it is necessary to suspend the natural attitude one has and any knowledge that comes from attitudes that are not phenomenological in nature (Giorgi, Giorgi & Morley, 2017, p. 178).

Before starting the data collection phase, I attempted to experience nature-based tourism while suspending any prior understandings I had that comes from scientific and academic sources. I achieved such a task by joining one of the excursions organized by Beyond Arctic and participated in the activities that occurred as part of the excursion. During my participation, I also got the opportunity to reflect on my own experience, while being able to obtain an overview of how the experience is like in general. As such, I came to understand the phenomenon of nature-based tourism using the experience I had after spending time in a natural setting. Additionally, through being part of the excursion, I came to be more aware of how my body reacted to the surrounding world, and how my senses reacted while being in a natural environment.

Based on the observation I did during the excursion, I understood that spending time in nature is a pleasant experience for others, and that many seem to be interested in this type of tourism experience. On the other hand, the way one reacts to the different elements of nature varies depending on the person. For instance, the weather could be quite harsh for those who are not accustomed to cold climates. The travelling experience and interests of the person can also affect how they might perceive the experience in nature, as well as their reaction to the different elements in such an environment. Regardless, I believed that there could exist a common census concerning some aspects of the experience among the participants.

4.5 Research ethics

Birch et al. (2012) stated that as the landscape of research experiences changes, the ethical aspect of research, including the usage of data and how one analyzes and interprets them, becomes increasingly important. Consequently, researchers must face numerous ethical

dilemmas associated with a variety of matters that emerge from the different layers of connection and communications, outside of the research realm. These matters can range from the disclosure of information and the contexts of it, the boundaries of privacy, as well as the access and sharing of information. Thus, it can be said that researchers face an increased level of responsibility regarding handling information: where, when and to whom said information can be disclosed (Birch et al., 2012, p. 2.) Being a researcher myself, it is then crucial that I take into account and reflect on the ethical aspect of my research at all phases of my research.

As mentioned previously, in order to gain access to individuals' experiences, which are also what I deem as necessary information for analysis, I decided to utilize semi-structured interviews as data gathering method. The first important step before starting our interviews then was to ensure that the participants consented to sharing their thoughts and experiences with me-the researcher. Thus, before starting the interview sessions, I distributed the form of consent (refer to appendix 1) that also outlined my research and explained to them that they can withdraw from the research at any given time without any consequences. The form of consent also contained my contact information as well as my supervisor's. Additionally, I also explained that they had the rights to not answer any question that they deemed uncomfortable. Once the participants have consented to being part of my research and have signed the form, I explain again the purpose of my research and what it encompasses. The interview session only started when there was a mutual understanding between both parties concerning the topics that will be covered.

After the interview sessions, the next ethical matters I needed to pay attention to is the process of storing and analyzing the information that the participants shared with me. Thus, it is important to keep in mind the notion of confidentiality, meaning that there will not be disclosure of information that can identify participants who are involved in the research process (BSA, 2004, as cited in Wiles et al., 2008). Additionally, in the context of research, confidentiality also means that the research's findings will be presented without identifying individuals who are involved in the process (Wiles et al., 2008, p. 418). Anonymization is commonly seen as the chief way that allows researchers to protect research participants from

the breach of confidentiality (Wiles et al., 2008, p. 422). Thus, to ensure that confidentiality will not be compromised, I applied anonymization through giving each of the research participant a pseudonym. I also made sure that I would be the only individual who would have access to all of the information that was shared by the research participants.

I also paid attention to the transcription process of the recorded interview sessions by ensuring that there will not be alterations of what was said by the research participants. Since I am using a phenomenological approach, I am required to obtain deep information and represent such information from the perspective of the research participants (Lester, 1999). As a result, I had to suspend all of my prior knowledge, beliefs and natural attitude during the analysis phase, so that I can present the participant's experience from the research participant's perspective, without the interference of a non-phenomenological attitude (Giorgi, Giorgi & Morley, 2017, p. 178). By doing so, I also avoided twisting the research participant's words into what I believed would be the correct representation of the phenomenon under study.

5. EXPERIENCING NATURE THROUGH THE SENSES

In this chapter, I will present the results that emerged from the analysis process. I will present the findings based on each of the five human senses and include some comments based on the observations I have made during both the analysis process and the interview sessions. In general, it seems that most of the participants highly valued the visual factor of their excursion, which resulted in abundant comments and remarks regarding the influences of sight as a sense. To some extent, sight earned a significant position as a sense that has an impact over the experience of the participants, followed by hearing, while the other senses received little attention. This is similar to what was stated in the article written by Pan & Ryan (2009), with sight claiming the top in the hierarchy of the senses.

One common trait shared among the interviewees were that it was their first time being in Lapland. Additionally, all of them were foreigners, with little to no information about Lapland and Rovaniemi in general. Most of the interviewees were experienced travelers, and most of them are still in their early to mid-twenties to early thirties. On the other hand, there was not enough information regarding taste, as participants did not disclose in detail how they felt about the light meal they had during their photography journey. Nevertheless, it has been suggested that taste can assist with memorability of an experience. In fact, this type of sensory impression can bring the individual back to where such an experience happened (e.g van Hoven, 2011). As such, I will focus on providing an analysis on how the participants experienced nature through sight, hearing, smell and touch.

5.1 Nature as seen through the eyes

Through the interview sections, I got the chance to meet and discuss about the importance of the senses with various individuals from different corners of the world. While the impacts varied on each of the participant, the visual component became the most influential sense according to the majority of the participants. However, it is also worth to mention that one of the participants believes that there is no dominant sense at play, and that all the senses

work together equally to affect the experience. As such, I will focus more on the opinions that the other participants have regarding the influences of the senses.

The picture of a foreign land whose nature is blanketed in pure, white snow seemed to be the sight that deeply moved the participants, having unique effects for each of them. I7 was amazed with the scenery she saw, claiming that: *...you see that only in movies or some photos, but when you really see it... it's something so normal but you're so amazed by it.* Additionally, I6 also claimed that she was pleased to see such thick level of snow, as such a sight rarely occurred for her and her friends before: *none of us has seen such thick snow before, so that is quite nice.* On the other hand, the beautiful natural scenery becomes the source of motivation for others to continue with their journey in the heart of nature. Perhaps it was the hours spent being in the cold, but at some point of the trek, I2 felt physically tired. However, the moment she looked up and took in the beautiful natural scenery that surrounds her, I2 felt the motivation to press on with her journey:

I was getting tired, and then I would look up, and I'd look at this beautiful nature around you, snow and pine trees. And that motivated me, it was so beautiful. And every time I looked up, I felt like it was worth it, I can't get tired. That was the motivation for me to continue walking.

For some travelers, the snowy, wintery landscape is the “pull” factor that motivates them to travel to Lapland, or to Rovaniemi specifically, which is the case with I3, I4 and I5. During the interview, I3 disclosed that he and I4 are no stranger to travelling. Nevertheless, this time they picked a destination that they have never been to before. I3 stated that *...we travel like, 3-4 times a year. This time it's more like for the snow and the winter scenery that attracted us to Lapland, Rovaniemi.* The motivation is shared by I5, who previously was travelling to Japan as *... a cultural thing I'm looking at, and then the city looking for some shopping. Then I came here, it's more of like a scenery nature thing, taking some photos.* Nature and its beauty as witnessed through the eyes also contributed to some of the participants' overall satisfaction and met their expectation. I3 and I4, who were travelling to Lapland for the first

time, was pleased with the snowy landscape, with I3 claiming *It fulfills my expectations actually. I can see a lot of snow already!* I5 shares this sentiment, as she also wanted to see such a scenery when travelling to Lapland for the first time: *Yea it's what I expected, that's what I wanted to see as well. The winter, snowing, the whiteness.*

Thus, in the context of experiencing nature via sight, the participants established a connection with nature via the “tourist gaze”. In his work, Urry (2002) stated that the gaze is particularly important in the observation of nature, which simultaneously is also crucial for building the human-nature relationship. Additionally, as suggested by Karlsdóttir (2013), when one detaches themselves from the usual environment of the daily life and work routine, they shift their gaze towards the environment encountered on their travel with interest and also curiosity. This gaze is often directed towards the special characteristics of the sceneries, such as landscapes, which in the process creates a uniqueness that cannot be encountered in everyday experience. As a result, there is a higher level of sensitivity regarding visual elements of landscape and townscape that would not be possible to encounter in the everyday life's environment. In the context of tourism, the images of nature are staged as being sights that are worth seeing, which utilizes the tourist gaze and establishes the boundary between what is otherwise ordinary and the unique, extra ordinary experience (Karlsdóttir, 2013, p. 140).

Therefore, parts of nature that are scenic or deemed worth seeing undergoes different processes to make them appealing to the ‘romantic gaze’ (MacCannell, 1973). Basing on what was suggested by Urry (2002) and Karlsdóttir (2013), the ‘romantic gaze’, which has its roots in the 19th century romanticism, implies an emphasis on the relationship with the object of the gaze that is personal and semispiritual. The tourists then are expected to perceive through looking at the object of the gaze (nature in the context of this research), either by themselves, or with people they deem significant. The notion behind the ‘romantic gaze’ is that individuals could feel pleasures from appreciating remarkable physical sights, and that the natural world and its scenery can evoke emotional responses. Additionally, there also exists the idea that it is beneficial for those who reside in urban, metropolitan areas to gaze

upon and experience nature, which is the case of the interviewed travelers in this research (Urry, 2002; Karlsdóttir, 2013, p. 140).

Additionally, one possible explanation for the dominant importance of sight, at least in the case of this thesis, is the fact that the experience lived by the participants revolve around sightseeing. In other word, the experience itself is built around sight, with the participants gazing, appreciating and trying to capture the beauty of Lappish nature through photography. As such, the importance and effects of the human senses to some extent would depend on the type of tourism experience that is being offered. For instance, Beyond Arctic-the company with whom I cooperated with to gather the material, focuses on photography tourism and integrates photography as a core element in most of their activities.

5.2 Nature as heard through the ears

Nature-based tourism experience is often associated with crucial components such as tranquility, solitude, peace and silence (Komppula, Konu & Vikman, 2017, p. 121). The sounds of nature, according to the results of a Europe-based sound preference test, are widely perceived to be pleasant (Järviluoma, Kytö, Uimonen & Vikman, 2009). Silence of nature does not mean a complete lack of sounds, but instead this “silence” points towards listening in a clearer manner in a more peaceful environment. The soundscape of nature is often described to be silent, and in the context of nature tourism, “silence” then can be described as quietness (Komppula, Konu & Vikman, 2017, p. 122; Uimonen, 2006; Vikman, 2006 & 2009). Studies have demonstrated that people react similarly when they participate in listening walks in a natural environment. Therefore, this implies that a peaceful walk in a silent environment can provide a positive experience (Järviluoma et al., 2009; Komppula, Konu & Vikman, 2017, p. 122; Vikman, 2010).

The subtle ambiance of Lappish nature, most particularly its silence, has received several comments from the participants. As mentioned previously, most of the participants come from urban areas, where everything is hectic and busy. As such, the silence that they encountered was a unique experience. The silence of nature brings about a feeling of balance for some of the participants, as is the case with I1 and I2. I2 disclosed during the interview that she found life to be stressful in Munich, and that the daily life has taken its toll on her. After getting in touch with nature and being surrounded by its silence, I1 and I2 found the solitude comforting, and regained a sense of balance in their otherwise busy lifestyle. I2 stated that:

We liked also that we sensed there wasn't too many people, so it was a sense of solitude and quietness. I mean in Germany there are also a lot of opportunities for hiking, and very nice trails. Sometimes when we do this, we look for that sort of experience, a little bit of exercise, some fresh air and quietness. Life is quite stressful with jobs, with cities, moving, timelines and projects. Sometimes you just need that to balance.

I1 and I2 also found the quietness and sense of solitude to be something that is not common in most touristic areas. The two travelers have been to numerous touristic locations, and shared that most cities, while having their own kind of energy and beauty, are just full of masses of people. Thus, the contradiction found in the silence atmosphere of Lappish nature is a unique experience for I1 and I2, as said by I2 during the interview:

Which is very rare compared to all the touristic locations, especially if you go to the cities. Last year we went to Rome, we went to the Baltic and all these places, but there were just so many people. Again, it has its beauty. I have also done business trips in Japan, I went to Tokyo, and there were just masses of people and it's a different type of energy. But definitely being in nature, with the whiteness and the quietness is definitely worth it.

The silence of nature is also felt as a source of tranquility, as seen during the interview with the group of I6 and her companions from the UK. The group arrived in Rovaniemi for their Easter holiday, which is done in a curious manner as they wanted to experience a place they have never been to before. I6 and her companions have mostly been travelling to cities until recently, when they begin to explore the rural side more. The silence of nature did not bother this group of young travelers, and on the contrary, they found it to be quite soothing. During the interview, I7 shared her experience being in nature and having the opportunity to be surrounded by the silence atmosphere:

There was a point when we lied down on the ice, it's quite quiet. But then, it kind of soothes me, and when you look at the blue sky, it's so soothing, the whole thing.

I8, a member of the group, also stated that the silenced provided her a sense of having an escape from her daily life. She enjoyed the silence, which *makes me feel away from everything else*. This becomes a common census for the group, as I6 also chimed in and shared her story of how she gained an insight of the soothing sensation one has when relaxing in a soothing environment:

One of my friends actually really likes sleeping under the sun, and I always wonder how she could sleep there when it's so bright. But I kind of got an insight today, because while we were chilling there, it's really soothing.

Sound and its effect on people are quite broad, given how our ears constantly perform their duties even when we are asleep (Kang & Schulte-Fortkamp, 2015, p. 1). One possible reason why hearing is not regarded as high as sight in an experience, according to Treasure (2009), is because sound is often underestimated as a crucial component in the quality of life. Nevertheless, sounds bear different effects on one's physiological, psychological and cognitive state (Treasure, 2009.) It is often the case that the perception of soundscape is subjective, as such perception is affected by the listener's experiences and preferences (Jennings & Cain, 2013, p. 295). Additionally, each individual's social meanings and cultural

background can also have an effect on how people perceive what they hear (Wissmann, 2014). In an urban environment, the prolonged exposure to constantly changing stimulus often causes its dwellers to be constantly attentive. Furthermore, the soundscape of an urban environment consists of a discordant field of stimuli due to a large number of sources of sounds, which over time can be unpleasant for those exposed to them (e.g Arvonen, 2014; Wissmann, 2014).

Experiencing nature through feeling the silence of the natural environment thus can be a rejuvenating experience for travelers, especially those who are exposed to a hectic rhythm of life on a daily basis (Komppula, Konu & Vikman, 2017, p. 128). Natural settings, such as the forest, to some extent can provide numerous mental health benefits, which is greatly welcomed in stress reduction (e.g Lee et al., 2009; Morita et al., 2007). Additionally, direct contact with nature can have a positive effect on the stress level and health status of people (Largo-Wight, Chen, Dodd & Weiler, 2011). It is also worth to mention that sounds are often easier to be noticed only when it is unwelcomed for the listener, whereas sounds with positive effects on one's well-being often receive less attention (Wissmann, 2014).

5.3 The scents of nature

According to van Hoven (2011), contrary to common belief, smell and its sensory experiences have received quite generous academic attention. Dann and Jacobsen (2003) stated that as a sense, smell is perceived to be associated with memorability, given how smell forms a connection between the past and the present. This connection lingers, which in the process also provides information for future references through the recall process. Additionally, the origins of specific smells can influence how such smells are described. Furthermore, the quality of a place, or how it is perceived can be articulated in the smell associated with such a place (Dann & Jacobsen, 2003.) Additionally, the situation in which the olfactory impression occurred can have an impact on how such impression is configured (e.g van Hoven, 2011).

However, the interview sessions have revealed that smell does not always necessarily have a strong impact on the overall experience. Additionally, the type of the experience and where such an experience takes place can also affect the influence of olfactory impressions. It was during the interview with I6 and her group that I received some input about the possible influence of olfactory impressions regarding one's overall experience. After I asked for their opinion concerning how each of the senses can affect one's experience in nature, I6 suggested to break the question down to one sense at a time. After some consideration, I6 stated that smell had a rather weak influence on her experience, as she said *I don't really smell anything in the nature*. After a period of discussion, with the other members attempting to recall the different smells they encountered, we reached a common consensus that smell contributed little to the group's experience in nature. As such, from the perspective of sensory influence, I6 offered a conclusion that *smell is the least important one for this kind of experience*. Therefore, in the context of photography tourism experience that occurred in nature that is the case of this research, the role of smell is minimized.

On the other hand, another interview also revealed that olfactory impression can assist with recalling a lived experience and where the experience occurred, which are similar to the theories offered by Dann and Jacobsen (2003). During their interview session, I2 shared about the experience she had in nature as she recalled what happened when she embarked on a photography trip with her partner and Beyond Arctic:

We came across the river that was running, it had nice sounds, and the quietness of the nature and the pine trees, the smell of the fire, all of those things bring you back to the forest.

Apart from the sounds and subtle ambiance of Lapland's nature, the smell of the fire that was made during the trip also contributes to the memorability of the place where the participant had the experience. As such, it is possible to evoke memories about such an experience some time after the experience has occurred. It could also be concluded that the stronger the smell,

the stronger its impact can be on one's experience and the memorability of the experience, as can be seen with I6 and her group (see also van Hoven, 2011).

5.4 Feeling the Arctic nature

A number of authors suggested that the sense of touch, or the haptic system, does not comprise of solely skin contact, as the sensory motor as well as cognitive parts of the body-and-brain-system also belong to the haptic system. Furthermore, the haptic system bears a significant importance in constructing one's feelings and habitual perceptions, not to mention the establishment of what is subjective and what is intersubjective (Obrador-Pons, 2007; Oakley et al., 2000; Paterson, 2005; van Hoven, 2011, p. 42.). In the case of this research, the most noticeable haptic impression that the participants experienced while being in nature was the coldness of the weather. However, the level of the coldness that was felt varied depending on the participant. For I1 and I2, the coldness that they experienced after being in nature over a prolonged period of time led to physical discomfort. There were feelings of tiredness, as I1 stated that *we were so tired, being hours in the cold*. It could also be due to their sensitivity to the cold which was the case for I2, who shared during the interview that *I am also sensitive to cold weather so for me it was a stretch*. Nevertheless, the cold and tiredness did not leave a negative effect on their overall experience. I2 shared during the interview that the excitement that she felt when she was on her trip overcame the discomfort of being exposed to the cold weather:

It was a little bit cold for us I have to say, I mean my feet were kind of cold, but definitely because of the adrenaline and excitement you don't feel it.

Musing about her experience, I2 then told me how relaxed she felt despite the aching of her muscles after hiking for a long period of time in nature:

You know, it's a real experience. Physically, I am tired since we just walked 5 km, but emotionally its really relaxing.

I also learned through my interview session of how amazed I7 was when she got to touch the snow in a natural surrounding that she thought only existed in photos and movies:

Yea, like you see that only in movies or some photos, but when you really see it and you get to touch it... so like there is snow on the tree, right? and then you touch it, and the snow falls down.. it's something so normal but you're so amazed by it.

As stated by I7, the fact that she got to touch snow and seeing it falling off the tree branch is not something extraordinary. However, what makes this experience unique and amazing is the fact she got to touch and see something ordinary in a different setting that she is not familiar with. Therefore, it can be concluded that the sense of touch offers an enhanced level of immersion, presence and familiarity with the experience (van Hoven, 2011, p. 43). In other words, the sense of touch therefore enhances the feeling of “withness” (Obrador-Pons, 2007; van Hoven, 2011, p. 43).

5.5 The role of the senses in nature-based tourism experience

In this section I will provide a summary of the findings concerning the common consensus for nature-based tourism, as well as how the senses influenced the way that the participants experienced nature. The findings reveal that nature-based tourism is regarded highly by the majority of the participants, who come from urban areas where the rhythm of life is quite hectic. Additionally, travelling to a rural destination that is rich in well-preserved natural areas appears to be a novel experience for these individual, being something that is not frequently done. In fact, their travel routines often include destinations that are big, bustling cities, and especially so among the younger participants. To the majority of these travelers, the encounter with nature is akin to a chance to regain their footing in the flow of the city life. Being surrounded by nature becomes positive experience that allows them to temporarily disconnect themselves from their daily life, as they are far away from what would remind them of their responsibilities and worries. Thus, the experience derived from nature-based tourism provides a temporary escape that soothes the participants, which in the process also helps with their mental and physical well-being.

The findings are in line with what has been suggested by numerous researches about nature-based tourism and the experience that it offers. Similar to what Mehmetoglu (2008) suggested, the participants see nature-based tourism as an opportunity to experience what would be a contrast to their daily life. Either due to curiosity or simply by chance, these individuals travel to natural areas searching for a break from their monotonous and stressful everyday life (Mehmetoglu, 2008.) Furthermore, nature-based tourism allowed the participants to temporarily disconnect from the world of their daily life, while being able to reconnect with nature and thus enjoying a different holiday experience (De Botton, 2002; Rousseau, 2004). Additionally, the experience that they had in nature helped with their mental well-being through the process of warding off the psychological damages (such as stress in this case) that comes with the urban life (Kuenzi & McNeely, 2008; Thoreau, 2017 [1854]). Hence, nature is the environment that offers an escape while simultaneously providing the feeling of freedom, as suggested by Edensor (2000).

The use of a phenomenological approach assisted tremendously with gathering descriptions of how the participants experienced nature-based tourism through their senses. Through the perspective of phenomenology, these descriptions were free from all forms of taxonomizing, classifying and conceptualizing, which is similar to van Manen (2017)'s suggestions. In other words, the findings emerged are a result of the participants describing how they experienced nature through their senses without having to meet predetermined scientific requirements (e.g Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; van Manen, 2001). Additionally, the use of methods that are associated with phenomenology proved to be beneficial for highlighting different participants' perceptions and how they lived their experience, and exactly as described from their perspective (e.g Lester, 1999).

Regarding the influence of the senses, the findings show that each of the sense contributes to the overall experience, although the level of impact varies. Similar to what was suggested by Pan and Ryan (2009), sight was the sense that held the strongest impact on the experience that the participants had in nature. Hearing was the second most impactful sense, followed by the senses of touch and smell. Taste had the least impact on the experience, given how

gastronomy held a minor role in the activities in nature. Moreover, each of the participant had their own responses to various sensory stimuli in nature, which confirms that every individual experiences sensory effects differently (Sheehan, 1967). However, it should be noted that the type of touristic activity can become the factor that decides the hierarchy of importance among the senses. In the case of this thesis, since photography is the core element of the activities, the experience itself is then built around sight, meaning that the visual component earns the highest significance among all the senses. Hypothetically, should the focus of the touristic activity be another element (i.e food or wine tourism), other senses, such as taste and smell, can claim the highest importance instead of sight.

The findings confirm the theories proposed by Volo (2009) and Meacci and Liberatore (2015), which means from a phenomenological perspective, the senses are part of a sequence of steps that transform nature-an event, into a unique experience for the participants. The participant's senses attempt to communicate with them after receiving physical stimuli from the natural environment, like what Larsen (2007) proposed in his work. As a result, this leads them to perceive, to "make sense" of the sensations they were feeling. This also allows them to then make their own interpretations and to internalize the experience they have in nature. Therefore, the findings at the same time confirmed that the senses are the first and corporeal gateway in the process of experiencing nature (Meacci & Liberatore, 2015.) Thus, the research findings show that all the senses have a role and work together to contribute to the overall nature-based tourism experience. In the process, the senses enhance the experience in nature while simultaneously increase the level of immersion from the participants. This confirm the theories found in a number of researches that were mentioned in previous chapters, such as Meacci and Liberatore (2015) and van Hoven (2011).

6. CONCLUSION

This thesis is an attempt to shed light on the common perception concerning nature-based tourism, as well as how the influences of the senses on the tourism experience that one has in nature. Ever since the turn of the millennium, nature-based tourism has become one of the fastest growing sectors within the tourism industry (Fredman & Tyrväinen, 2010; Samgönguráðuneytið, 2004). Moreover, the process of globalization and urbanization has changed our lives significantly, leading to a disconnect from nature. The urban life also inflicts psychological damages upon us, which prompted a need for many to have a break from their daily life (Kuenzi & McNeely, 2008; Thoreau, 2017 [1854]). Therefore, nature-based tourism became an appealing solution, being able to create an opportunity to temporarily disconnect from one's daily life and provides a contrast to the mundane life one faces at home (De Botton, 2002; Mehmetoglu, 2008; Rousseau, 2004).

On the other hand, there have been efforts in tourism studies to gain an insight on senses in tourism (e.g Richards, Pritchard & Morgan, 2010, p. 1099). Despite the visual component receiving a heavy focus originally, current tourism literature emphasizes the importance of non-visual senses and their impact on the tourist experience (Agapito et al., 2014, p. 67; Richards, Pritchard & Morgan, 2010, 1099). However, there is still a lack of studies concerning how the senses as a whole have an influence on the tourist experience, which is the reason why this research was conducted. Lapland, or specifically Rovaniemi, was chosen to be the research location due to its pristine and well-kept abundant nature. Such a rural setting proved to be ideal for analysing the tourist's sensory experience, as stimulation of numerous senses is possible (Agapito et al., 2012; Gretzel & Fesenmaier, 2010; Kastenholz et al., 2012).

The thesis seeks answers for the research questions, which inquire about how the tourists see nature-based tourism, the influence of the senses on the tourist experience in nature, and whether there exists one sense that has the greatest impact on the overall experience. The research yields two important findings, which revealed the common census about nature-

based tourism and how the senses contribute to the tourist's experience in nature. In general, nature-based tourism and its experience left a positive impression on those who participated in this research via interview sessions. To these individuals, the experience of being able to reconnect with nature while disconnecting from their daily urban life was both unique and rejuvenating. This is especially so when they happen to discover about Lapland either by curiosity or by chance. The encounter with nature thus provided a temporary escape and an opportunity to regain a sense of balance in life, after being exposed to a hectic rhythm that is common for urban life. The experience and tourism activities that occurred in nature soothed the participants and helped them to relax, which in turn proves that nature-based tourism experience can give a boost to one's physical and mental well-being (e.g. Brymer et al., 2012; Kuenzi & Mcneely, 2008;).

The findings of the research showed that the senses in fact play a crucial role in the tourist experience in nature. To some extent, the senses help the tourist with forming a connection with the natural environment that surrounds them. Additionally, the senses translate the physical stimuli that emerge from the external environment, which in the process encourage the tourist to make their own interpretations of these sensations that they were feeling (e.g. Larsen, 2007; Meacci & Liberatore, 2015;). Furthermore, it appears that all of the senses have their share of contribution to the overall nature-based tourism experience, although the level of impact based on each sense can vary. As mentioned previously at the end of chapter 5, the focus of the tourist activity can change the hierarchy of importance for the senses. Thus, it can be concluded that the level of influence of the senses varies depending on the type of tourist activity and the characteristics of the tourism product.

Regarding managerial implications, the findings of this thesis propose a framework that encourages an integration of all the senses into the conceptualizing, planning and designing of tourism products or services (e.g. Agapito et al, 2014). Touristic experience is multisensory, meaning that destinations need to pay equal attention to all the senses instead of focusing only on the visual element (Dann & Jacobsen, 2002; Franklin & Crang, 2001). From the perspective of the tourism industry, leveraging sensory stimuli has a significant role in the

creation of memorable experience (Meacci & Liberatore, 2015). Additionally, studies have shown that the interactions between different senses are a powerful phenomenon, meaning that all the senses are equally important (Krishna, 2012; Pan & Ryan, 2009).

The findings of the thesis also imply the use of a sense-bases model that can act as the framework for the creation of a more engaging tourist experience, similar to the suggestions of Meacci and Liberatore (2015). This framework involves the identification and thus creation of multiple experiential points that emerge during the process of experiencing the tourist attraction. Similar to contact points, experiential points are the point of contact and interactions between the tourist and the tourist attraction. The next step then is to find and assign to each of these experiential points a main sense that is the most suitable based on the experiential point's sensory nature. Consequently, it is necessary to assign a score for every sense involved and evaluate their effectiveness regarding the tourist experience. On the other hand, if the involvement of some sensory dimensions is lower than expected, it is necessary to create new experiential points. As a result, the use of such framework can help tourism destinations and operators to evaluate the impact of different senses on the overall tourist experience. Furthermore, they can in the process create a more engaging experience that fully involves their tourists (Meacci & Liberatore, 2015, p. 5-6.)

The study was conducted using methods associated with phenomenology, as well as a phenomenological approach. In the process, the researcher was able to gather in-depth and rich description of how the tourists perceive nature-based tourism, and how they lived the tourist experience in nature. While the results were fruitful, it is questionable whether the study can be generalized to other destinations and larger population of tourists, since perceptions and personal experiences are subjective. As the researcher utilized interpretative phenomenological analysis, the sampling pool as a result was small (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Therefore, the sample only represents the experiences of a small number of tourists who visited Lapland during a specific time of the year. Additionally, the difference in demographics of the participants, the characteristics of the research location and tourism activities do not assure the possibility of generalization.

For further research, there should be a more holistic approach to the importance of the senses regarding the tourist experience. Additionally, there is a need for empirical studies that use a holistic approach to the multisensory nature of the tourist experience on a global level (Agapito et al., 2013). Moreover, it would also be necessary to scrutinize about whether the type of tourism activities can change the hierarchy of sensory importance. Another possibility for further research is to see whether the characteristics of the destination can influence the level of sensory impacts, as well as the level of involvement for different senses. From the researcher's perspective, there also needs to be more research about how the senses would interact, as well as their impact on the tourist experience when there is a lack of involvement for one or more senses.

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Appendix 1: Letter of consent

LETTER OF CONSENT

Dear research participant,

My name is Khanh Tran. I am Master's degree student at the Multidimensional Tourism Institute (MTI), University of Lapland (Rovaniemi, Finland) under the supervision of Lecturer José-Carlos García-Rosell. You are invited to participate in a research project entitled "Experiencing nature: the roles of the human senses on nature-based tourism experience". The purpose of the study is to discover the importance of the senses on nature-based tourism experience. The result of the study will be published as part of my master thesis.

I am pursuing a research about the roles of the human senses in tourism. As a result, I am conducting this interview to gather data that is necessary to further my research. The interview will be recorded, and they will be used only for research purposes.

The data will be treated anonymously in order to protect your privacy, thus ensuring the confidentiality of the interview. Your participation is completely voluntary, meaning that you can withdraw from the interview at all time.

Should you have any question about my research and the interviews, you can contact me at ktrangu@ulapland.fi or my supervisor José-Carlos García-Rosell (jgarcia@ulapland.fi, Tel. +358 40 484 4190).

Sincerely,

Khanh Tran
Master's degree student
email

I give consent to use the interview as data for the purpose mentioned above.

Signature

Date

Print Name

Appendix 2: Interview questions

Information on the interviewee

- Name of the interviewee
- Country of origin

- Would you say that your current place of living is close to nature?

- Age and occupation
- Could you tell me about your routines of travelling? (where do you tend to travel, what usually attracts you, etc.)

1. Nature as an “pull” element

- What was your motivation for coming to Lapland, Rovaniemi?

- What expectations did you have for Lapland and Rovaniemi before coming?

2. Nature-based experiences and sensual implications

- Could you describe your experience to me? For example what you did, how did you feel, etc.

- Would you say that your senses influence your overall experience?

- Do you notice any changes in your perception when you're exposed to nature?
- Did the silence have any effect on you?
- How do you feel about the scenery? Is it any different compared from where you are from?
- Does your appetite change when you're surrounded by nature?
- Does being in nature sensitize your sense of touch?
- Which sense contributes the most to your experience? Could you tell me why?

3. Human senses and enjoying nature:

- How did you feel before and after having experienced being so close to nature?

- What is your overall opinion now that you have experienced nature in Lapland?

- Has Beyond Arctic provided everything that you expected?
- Is there anything that can be improved?
- Could you describe how you feel about photography as part of the experience being in nature?

Thank you for your precious time !